

RAYMOND MOLEY

Nixon, Kennedy and Castro



OLD enemies never die. They merely refurbish their rusty weapons. And since Richard Nixon has been so well endowed with implacable critics, his new book, "Six Crises," has been combed for errors. One of these critics is apparently in the White House, for there was issued from that source a denial that when Candidate Kennedy stated in the 1960 campaign that action should be taken to overthrow Castro, he knew that preparations for such a revolt were already under way under the direction of the United States Central Intelligence Agency.

On Sept. 23, 1960, Mr. Kennedy gave an exclusive statement to the Scripps-Howard newspapers saying, "The forces fighting for freedom in exile and in the mountains of Cuba should be sustained and assisted."

Mr. Nixon knew that such preparations for a revolution in Cuba were already secretly under way, and he also knew that his opponent had been briefed on all phases of foreign policy by Allen Dulles, chief of the CIA. He therefore had no option but to believe that Mr. Kennedy was recklessly using that information to propose something which the Eisenhower administration was preparing.

But before replying to the Kennedy statement, Mr. Nixon asked Interior Secretary Fred Seaton to go to the White House and find out if Mr. Kennedy had been informed of the secret operations. Seaton reported that the candidate had been so informed.

This put Mr. Nixon in a critical dilemma. If he joined in the Kennedy advocacy of intervention, which would have been very popular with the country, he would be implying that such preparations were under way, because he was known to have been a factor in making administration policy with regard to Cuba. Nor could he accuse his opponent of making public what had been communicated confidentially to him in the briefing. For that, too, would uncover the secret operation.

All this he revealed in his book. Then the White House on March 20, 1962, issued a statement that Mr. Kennedy did not know about the Cuban preparations

when he made his statement in 1960. And Allen Dulles chimed in with a statement that there had been a "misunderstanding."

MR. NIXON then issued a statement standing by his statement in the book and adding, "President Eisenhower has authorized me to state that, following the practice he had established in 1956, he had given instructions that in regard to United States intelligence operations abroad, Sen. Kennedy was to be as fully briefed on our foreign problems as I was."

If the critics of Mr. Nixon wish to be fair, which I doubt, they would turn this question back to Messrs. Kennedy and Dulles.

Did or did not Allen Dulles obey the orders of President Eisenhower and tell Mr. Kennedy about the most important Cuban preparations? If so, why does Mr. Kennedy now deny that he knew what he was supposed to know? A matter of veracity is involved here, or at least a matter for clarification.

Just what does Mr. Dulles' mealy-mouthed word "misunderstanding" mean? Who is misunderstanding whom? Does he mean that the 1962 White House statement is due to a lapse of memory? Does Mr. Nixon "misunderstand" what the two-and-a-half-hour briefing covered? If so, how does Dulles explain that he omitted from that briefing the most critical operation in which the CIA was involved?

But the Nixon critics have no intention of being fair. Perhaps some of them who write in the papers under their own names are really venting their resentment because the Nixon book reveals some of them, by name, as having been grossly unfair in reporting the campaign in 1960. Those of us who write for the press are not hesitant about dishing out criticism of others. But we should in return admit the right of the objects of that criticism to criticize us. To paraphrase Mr. Truman, if we can't stand the heat we had better get out of the kitchen.

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